

HON. G. RANDELL moved that leave of absence for one fortnight be granted to the Hon. C. A. Piesse (South-East). He took it that neither the President nor the House would, under the circumstances, think of bringing a member to book who happened, during the period of crisis through which we had been passing, to go beyond the term of leave granted by the House.

THE PRESIDENT: That was so. There was no business before the House, but simply meetings for adjournment.

Question put and passed.

THE PRESIDENT left the Chair for a few minutes, and resumed it.

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the Hon. G. RANDELL, the House farther adjourned until Thursday, 2nd January.



Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 20th December, 1901.

Lands Office: Tendering for Additions—Guano Export, Select Committee's Report—Personal Explanation (Hon. T. F. Quinlan)—Political Situation: Statement by the Premier (Resignation)—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

LANDS OFFICE—TENDERING FOR ADDITIONS.

MR. DAGLISH, without notice, asked the Minister for Works: Whether it is a fact that the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department has invited tenders for additions to the Crown Lands Office, which will cost some thousands of pounds, by private letters to a few builders whom he knows. If not, why are tenders not invited by public advertisement in the usual manner?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. T. F. Quinlan): As Minister for Works, I am dead; but I have ascertained the nature of the question, and it is a fact that Mr. Jull (Under Secretary) has recommended that certain firms be asked to tender for this particular work, for the reason that the department has had such trouble in the past; that is to say, contractors have failed financially in some instances, and loss has occurred. It was stated that certain firms had been asked to tender for the work. I took exception to that course; but in the circumstances I could think of only one other firm which I knew to be a good one, and the name of that firm was added. I was told this mode of inviting tenders had been the custom in the past, and I did not feel justified in making any variation at the present time.

GUANO EXPORT—SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

MR. RASON brought up the report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the export of guano from Abrolhos Islands.

Report received, and ordered to be printed.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. T. F. Quinlan) said: I desire to make a personal explanation, and in doing so I feel somewhat pained at having given offence the other evening, when I spoke under strong provocation. I had an altercation with an hon. member opposite just a few minutes before, in respect to my private business, and I was then told I had no right to act as I did in my private affairs in dismissing an employee. To that I answered that I would be only too glad to give the information if it were sought in this House, but that I did not consider that my private affairs concerned the public; and I was then challenged as to what would happen if I took a similar course on another occasion. Therefore, I felt very much aggrieved, and gave expression to one or two offensive words, which I wish to-day to retract, and I do so unconditionally, because I have been grossly misrepresented, in so far as I have been placed before the public in a false light, for it was asserted that, being a capitalist, I was opposed to labour. I

say here unhesitatingly, as I stated that evening in my speech, that I consider no particular party should dominate, and I am sure the records of *Hansard* will prove these words. I asserted, and I wish to make it plain to-day, that I entirely disagree with any particular section dominating. I believe we should work hand in hand, and particularly capital and labour. I think this House well knows, and many friends here whom I have known a lifetime will vouch for this fact, that the last charge that could be laid at my door is that of being purse-proud; and if I possessed the whole of Western Australia, it would make no difference to me. I feel having such a charge laid at my door more keenly than I should any other, even a charge of murder. I spoke under provocation, and I hope that the explanation I have now offered will be accepted in the spirit in which it is given. (General applause.)

POLITICAL SITUATION.

STATEMENT BY THE PREMIER (RESIGNATION).

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. E. Morgans), who on rising was greeted with applause, said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform the House that I have tendered my resignation to His Excellency the Governor. I communicated with His Excellency with regard to a dissolution, and regret to say His Excellency has not seen his way clear to accept the advice I gave him in that communication. There is one thing in regard to this position which I should like to point out, that notwithstanding the fact that I have not the slightest doubt His Excellency came to a decision that is probably from his point of view in the best interests of the country—it certainly is a right that remains in his hands—I regret that His Excellency has been obliged to arrive at the conclusion he has done with regard to the request I have made; and I regret this the more because I know that my hon. friends opposite desired the same thing. (Laughter and hear, hear.)

MR. DOHERTY: Don't rub it in too much.

THE PREMIER: We remember that when my friend opposite (Mr. Leake) was defeated on the want-of-confidence motion, the first thing he did was to

apply to His Excellency for a dissolution, and that His Excellency thought fit to decline on that occasion, as he has on this. I want it to be clearly understood that I do not for a moment question the motives or the good intentions of His Excellency in this matter. He is an absolutely independent authority, and I am only too glad to bow to the decision he has given in this case. I am perfectly sure, from what we know of His Excellency, that nothing but a spirit of patriotism could animate him in the decision of a question of this kind; and I am perfectly sure that when His Excellency arrived at that conclusion, it was not in any partisan spirit, but that of doing what he considered the best in the interests of the country. Therefore I accept that decision at his hands with pleasure. I accept that decision because I believe that he, after mature consideration, concluded that it was in the best interests of Western Australia that my request should not be granted. But, at any rate, I think I may say on this occasion, and I am sure my hon. friends opposite will applaud me, that I proposed what they proposed. They proposed a dissolution. I have backed that position up. They said they were supported in the position by a portion, if not the whole, of the Press of the country. With regard to the position of the Press of this country, I would like to say a few words, if I may be permitted. It has been supposed that the Press of this State and of any other British-speaking country is impartial.

MR. GEORGE: Supposed; yes.

THE PREMIER: I am sorry to say I do not quite agree with that proposition. First of all, my hon. friend the late Premier—I suppose he will be Premier again very soon—

MR. GEORGE: Don't be too sure of that.

THE PREMIER: When the late Premier asked His Excellency for a dissolution, the Press said it ought not to be done, especially the *Morning Herald*, which has given him a strong support. First of all their position was that a dissolution should be given, then that it should not be given, because the country wanted a democratic leader like my friend, and that in case I could not form a Ministry that would command

the confidence of this country, then my hon. friend should be called, and asked to form a party for the purpose of carrying out the mandates of this State. I have seen some examples of somersaulting and topsyturveying, but I am bound to say that in the history of newspaper enterprise there has never before been such an instance of topsyturveying and somersault arrangements as we have seen on the part of the *Morning Herald* with regard to this matter. For that paper, it is perfectly clear, the question was not one of measures but of men. When we realise the position that the programme laid before this country by my Ministry was not in any way a copy of the programme laid before the people by my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake), but a programme which he had copied from my friend the Hon. G. Throssell —

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Laughter.

THE PREMIER: When we realise that, it is quite easy to understand how it comes about that the object of the editor of the *Morning Herald*, who no doubt desires to influence public opinion in this State, was not one of measures but of men. Then we have the *West Australian*, a most interesting journal. (Some laughter.) What is the position of that well-known organ in this crisis? Its position is very extraordinary, from whatever point of view it may be looked at. First of all the *West Australian* patted A. E. Morgans on the back once; then it patted Mr. George Leake on the back twice; then it patted A. E. Morgans half a pat; and finally its conductors decided that they didn't know where they were. (Some laughter.)

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear; hear, hear.

MR. DOHERTY: They are sitting in an odd position, you know.

THE PREMIER: I do not think that such a journal should command much influence or respect in the country.

[MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] For my part, I certainly prefer the outspoken policy of the *Morning Herald*: I certainly prefer the attitude of the *Morning Herald*.

MR. DOHERTY: Hear, hear. One knows what it means.

THE PREMIER: We knew the position of the *Morning Herald* exactly. We knew

perfectly well that journal was prepared to accept my friend opposite, the leader of the Opposition, at any cost, at any price. It did not matter what his principles, his political principles, were. That journal was prepared to accept him as leader on any terms. For the *Morning Herald* it was, therefore, not a question of measures. Now, I can admire that position to some extent. I can admire that position because it means that the newspaper in question is prepared to support somebody. When, however, I come to the *West Australian* I find that journal wants to support the leader of the Opposition, but has not the courage to do so.

MR. TAYLOR: It only didn't like to do it.

THE PREMIER: This being the last time I shall have the pleasure of addressing the House from the honourable position I now occupy, I wish to say something farther. I am going to resign my position in favour of the leader of the Opposition, and in doing so I can only wish him every success in his enterprise; but I desire to make a few remarks more to this House and to the country with regard to the present position. We are faced with a position which is to my mind a somewhat appalling one. We have the position of a Government in power, supported by a majority; and yet we find that majority conniving with the minority to put the Government out of power.

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. GEORGE: Shame!

THE PREMIER: We have this unfortunate position, that men who come to caucus meetings of the party which they are supposed to support, who listen to the whole of the arguments on the position, who are prepared to offer their advice, and who say to the Government "Stand firm to your position: go down with your flag flying, we will be at your elbow: we are the men who will support you," that those men are nevertheless prepared to come out and stand before this country as traitors to the cause.

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. GEORGE: There are some on the other side, too.

THE PREMIER: I say, this is an appalling position.

MINISTERIAL MEMBER: They betrayed caucus secrets.

THE PREMIER: I say it is an appalling position for any country to find itself in.

MR. GEORGE: Rub it in!

THE PREMIER: I say such is the position of those hon. members who are prepared to lend their support to the Opposition, but who, I regret to say, have not the courage to go from this (Ministerial) side of the House and sit there (Opposition side).

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear. Shame to them!

THE PREMIER: I regret to have to say this. I can point my finger at them; but they have not the courage to stand up, and they have not the courage of their opinions. They have not the courage to cross over to the other side of the House and say to the leader of the Opposition, "We are prepared to support you." They have attended the caucus meetings of my party.

MR. GORDON: They are worse than rats.

THE PREMIER: They have heard the whole of the policy which was suggested in those caucus meetings; they have promised to support the interests of this party; and then they have gone over to the other side. Have they been spies?

MR. JACOBY: Yes; spies.

THE PREMIER: Well, I do not wish to accuse them of being that; but, at any rate, we know that at the time they were attending those caucus meetings they were negotiating with the leader of the Opposition for the purpose of bursting up the party of which they were supposed to be members.

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear. Rub it into them!

THE PREMIER: Now it is for the country to decide, it is for the country to pass judgment on those hon. members.

MR. DOWERTY: Hear, hear. And the country will do so, too!

THE PREMIER: They have betrayed the party to which they belonged.

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear; hear, hear.

THE PREMIER: If those hon. members had gone over to the other side without attending the caucus meetings of this party, we could forgive them for going over; because, admittedly, every man has a perfect right to change his political opinions, and every man has a

perfect right to sever his allegiance from a political party. But when hon. gentlemen, or rather I will say hon. members — [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear] — hon. members of this House decide to attend the caucus meetings of a political party, and at the same time they are aware that it is their intention to sell that party, then I in my position to-night denounce such men to the public. [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] The leader of the Opposition is welcome to their support.

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. JACOBY: They will sell him too.

THE PREMIER: I say, they will sell him sooner or later as they have sold me.

MR. GORDON: He knows too much for them, though.

THE PREMIER: I say the leader of the Opposition has little hope of carrying on an honest Government in this country when members of a political party will sell themselves, for some reason best known to themselves, to any other political party in this House. [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] Now I desire to make a farther reference to the state of affairs. I desire to speak of the position of the Labour party. I maintain that the leader of the Opposition has sold the Labour party in this House; and yet he —

MR. LEAKE: No.

LABOUR MEMBERS: No.

THE PREMIER: He is the acknowledged leader of the Labour party.

LABOUR MEMBERS: No; he is not.

THE PREMIER: Now, what do we see? We see this appalling, this disappointing position created by my hon. friend opposite, who has been and who still is the acknowledged leader of the Labour party in this House — that he has put them in a minority. How and by what means has he done this? He has done it by attracting over to his side what the Labour members have been pleased to call the "conservative element" in this House. And what is the result? That he has placed the Labour members of this State in a minority in this House.

MR. JAMES: Did you not want the Labour members?

THE PREMIER: That is the real position; and I appeal to hon. members sitting on the Labour bench to say

whether or not they consider themselves in as strong a position to-day, with Mr. Harper, Mr. Rason, and Mr. Ewing on their side, as they held in the past. I appeal to them to ask themselves whether they are as strong in the councils of the State to-day as they have been in the past.

MR. JOHNSON: Leave us to fight that.

MR. GORDON: Fight for your seats.

THE PREMIER: I should like to ask them if they feel that their position is as secure as it was before. During my period of office, I have never said one word against labour in this House. I have never said one word against the gentlemen who sit on that (Labour) bench. On the contrary, my desire has at all times been to do what is right; to work in unison with them, and to assist them in every way in my power. But I have never tried to sell them. Now I am resigning my office. I have appealed to His Excellency the Governor to grant a dissolution. I have received from His Excellency a very well-worded letter in reply, a letter full of common sense and good argument, and a letter which will prove that his only desire is to do what is best for this country; and that is what I admire him for—[MEMBERS: Hear, hear]—because it shows he is a Governor who desires to do what is right. In his letter, he says he declines to grant this dissolution of Parliament, because he has reason to believe that my friend opposite (Mr. Leake) will be able to form a Government with a majority. Now, how did my friend become able to do that? How could he form a Government with a majority in this House? The majority was on our (Government) side of the House. How is it that my friend is in a position to form a Government with a majority in this House, when the majority sits on my side? [MR. MONGER: Hear, hear.] That is, if the members of that majority were true — [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear]—if they were men, if they had the courage of their convictions. I would ask, how is it possible for my honourable friend to have a majority? How is it that he can carry on the Government of this country, when we know that the majority is on my side of the House? The only answer is: certain members of the Government party are prepared to sacrifice

their dignity and their positions. They are prepared to sacrifice anything in order to retain their seats. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] They are prepared to go over to the political enemy. What for? For the purpose of remaining in this House. Now, I say that is an undignified position for anybody in this House to occupy. Notwithstanding that my friend opposite may have, for a time, a majority in this House, I say that the men who will desert one party will desert another; and that when the first moment of pressure arrives, whatever that pressure may be, those men will be prepared to desert the other party and to come over again to this side. But I should like to say that I do not want their support. [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] The men who will desert when the battle is in the height of its fury are men whose support I do not want. Let them go. And I cheerfully ask Mr. Harper, Mr. Ewing, and Mr. Rason to pass to the other side of the House. Let them go there (into Opposition): I do not want their support—[MR. DOHERTY: Hear, hear]—but I do say a day of reckoning must come; and when that day does come, the members of this party will want an account from those gentlemen. I wish to tell the House that I really commiserate more with the Labour party in this Chamber than with anyone else. They have been sold.

MR. TAYLOR: They have not.

MR. GORDON: You are too thick-headed to see it as yet.

THE PREMIER: They have been placed in a minority. They had at their disposal a certain number of votes; and now the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake) has called over from this (Government) side of the House some arch-conservatives. Such arch-conservatives were very few; and I am glad to say I have got rid of them, and my friend opposite has got them.

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. HOPKINS: A fair exchange.

THE PREMIER: A fair exchange. And although I regret in the interests of Labour that the Labour vote has been nullified to this extent by the adhesion to the Leake party of some of the conservative element in this House, still I hope the Labour party may see the error

of their ways, and that they will, at no very distant date, perceive that their policy—that is if their policy may be correctly judged from their professed principles—is not to support the conservative element in this House, but to support the principles of democracy which they have so strongly advocated up to the present time. I have tendered my resignation to His Excellency. I have not yet received from him an intimation that it has been accepted. I am waiting for that; and it is only a question of a short time. I shall receive that communication from His Excellency the Governor; I shall be prepared to step down, and to allow my friend to come over to this side of the House and to occupy this (Treasury) bench. But I know that when he comes here there are some matters which will engage his serious attention. One thing which will have to meet with his attention is the Esperance railway. There is also the question of the sliding scale and the removal of those customs duties. There are various other matters which will have to engage the attention of my friend.

MR. JAMES: He is capable of dealing with them. Do not worry.

THE PREMIER: And I say, knowing as I do that he will have the support of the whole of the Labour members on the question of the sliding scale, and the support of a large number of hon. members on both sides of this House, we shall see what my friend's Government are prepared to do in reference to those very important matters. The Esperance railway is one of the matters which must receive early attention from any Government in power; and there is no doubt that my friend will be able to deal with that very important question at no distant date. And I have the satisfaction of knowing that the moment that question comes before the House, every member on the Labour bench will be on the side that asks the Government to grant the request for that railway. They must be there. It is part of the Labour policy. And as regards the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Oats), I know that he will be obliged, during the division on that question, to be with the party which requests that Esperance railway. I know that there are various gentlemen on the other side of the House, such as the

member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins), who will be with me on this question.

MR. HOPKINS: I was not with you on the Hampton Plains railway question.

THE PREMIER: And I can promise hon. members that at no distant date I will bring this question before the House, and will press it to a division. I will find out who are the friends of the Esperance railway, and who are not; we shall divide the House on the question; and I quite expect that I shall have the new Premier (Mr. Leake) on my side in that division, because he is a great goldfields man. He has been to the goldfield. He went up to my constituents in Coolgardie—(some laughter)—but I noticed one thing. He never said a word about the Esperance railway. [Several interjections by Members.] That fact shows what an excellent special pleader he is. It shows how well he can—what shall I say—gull the people. I shall not say that. It shows how well he is able to fence with a delicate question. I shall put it in that way. Not a single word about the Esperance railway; but he was clever enough to suggest that A. E. Morgans should be asked that question. (General laughter.) Now we have the whole position in a nutshell. It is a case of a very clever barrister dealing with a very difficult question. There we have the whole position. But when it comes to the reality of a division in this Parliament, it will be another thing. I am quite sure there are several hon. members on this side of the House who will be prepared to support the motion I intend to bring in at an early date with regard to this railway; and I rejoice in the fact that I shall call to my aid on that occasion every hon. member on the Labour bench.

MR. DAGLISH: No.

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, yes; that is right.

THE PREMIER: I shall have them all with me, with the probable exception of Mr. Daglish, who represents Subiaco.

MR. TAYLOR: You can rest assured regarding the others.

THE PREMIER: I shall have the whole of them on my side, with that exception. And what is the position? That Esperance railway must be built; and notwithstanding any support I may have on the coast, it is my intention to interest myself in the construction of that Esperance railway; and I shall be

one of its strongest supporters in the House, so long as I have the honour to sit in Parliament. Now in a few days we shall have in this House a rearrangement of parties. We shall find out who are the "ratters."

OPPOSITION MEMBER: Tell us about Piesse.

THE PREMIER: When we have a division, the House and the country will know who are the men who stuck to their colours, and who have been unfaithful to the cause they are supposed to maintain. The time must come: it is near at hand. I might have brought about this desired end to-day; but I did not. Why? Because it was not my desire to embarrass His Excellency in carrying out his wishes with regard to the dissolution for which I asked. It is not my desire by any means to force upon the country a delay in the decision of this important matter. It is not my desire to oppose any arrangement that will be for the benefit of this State. On the contrary, as the leader of this side of the House, it is my duty in these circumstances to do all I can to farther the best interests of the State. It is my duty to sacrifice personal interests; it is my duty to sacrifice personal ambitions; and it is my duty to do the best I can for the State of Western Australia. That is my position to-day; and I say I am quite prepared to step down from the place I now hold. I am quite prepared to let my friend opposite come in.

MR. TAYLOR: So are the people.

MR. GORDON: You will see.

THE PREMIER: But when he comes to this side of the House, we will test the truth, the soundness of his position. With regard to goldfields demands, the House will test him on the question of the Esperance railway. We shall find out what the hon. member and his Government say about that. There shall be no equivocation: we will make a test vote of the question, "Shall that Esperance railway be built or not?" That is the point. If the House decide that it shall not be built, if members refuse to support my motion, then the goldfields will know whether or not they can rely upon the hon. member opposite as their friend; because that is what they desire, the Esperance railway. Then we will come to the question of the sliding scale; that

will be brought forward. I have taken a view in regard to that, and I wish to explain it. At the present moment, or at the time I made my manifesto, this country was doubtful what the financial position would be; but that question will be started from the other side of the House. I do not say I am going to support it (laughter)—I may support it or I may not; but it will be started from the other side of the House, and it will be for my friend and the Government to decide whether or not the concession is to be granted—that is the removal of the sliding scale. I say now, if it is the intention of any Government to refuse it without proper discussion and consideration, I shall be against them. Mr. Speaker, I beg to say now to the House that I have handed in my resignation to the Governor, and although I have not received his acceptance of that resignation I expect to receive it, and therefore I think I shall be in order if I move the adjournment of the House to enable His Excellency to make the necessary arrangements in connection with the incoming Government. I have nothing more to say. I only await the acceptance of my resignation at the hands of His Excellency the Governor, and I am prepared, as soon as he accepts that resignation, to step down for my hon. friend. I beg to move that this debate be adjourned until to-morrow.

MEMBERS: Make it Monday or Tuesday.

THE PREMIER: I beg to consult with the member for West Perth (Mr. Leake).

MR. LEAKE: If you move that the House at its rising adjourn until to-morrow, we can amend that.

THE PREMIER: Will you support such a motion.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; certainly.

THE PREMIER: I beg to move that the House adjourn until to-morrow.

MEMBERS: Make it Tuesday.

MR. LEAKE: Move that the House do now adjourn.

THE PREMIER: Yes; I move that.

MR. HARPER (Beverley): May I rise in personal explanation before that question is put? I think I am entitled to speak, as the Premier has used my name pretty freely, but I entirely repudiate the position which he has attempted to put

me in. We are all aware that some attempts were made to form a coalition Government since the Premier came into office—

MEMBER: By Mr. Hackett.

MR. HARPER: Which that gentleman advocated himself; I mean the Premier.

THE PREMIER: That is right.

MR. HARPER: The Premier told us he had a majority of 10 or 11 when he took up his position, but that majority has somehow or other disappeared to a large extent.

THE PREMIER: Yes; it has.

MR. HARPER: The Premier considered that it was best in the interests of the country that a coalition should be formed.

THE PREMIER: Under certain conditions.

MR. HARPER: I know myself, and so does every member in the House, that a dissolution is not desirable for the country at the present time.

THE PREMIER: Why? Give some reason for it?

MR. HARPER: I think everyone knows; I need not say why. It is absurd to argue it. The position is this. I knew from the lips of the Premier that his main desire was to get out of the position—how or why I am not prepared to say; but when things came to the very worst I said to myself, "I have advocated strongly that we should try and get over our difficulty some way or other, that we should be prepared to make sacrifices. Am I not prepared to make sacrifices to bring that about?" I then said to myself "If it is the wish of those belonging to the party that I work with," that is what is called the country party—

THE PREMIER: You are not justified in going back on your own party.

MR. HARPER: I have not gone back on my party. All I am attempting to do is to bring about a coalition. I have never suggested for a moment or dreamed of joining the Leake party. I would not think of doing it. I would only join as one of a coalition. These are the only terms on which I could dream of it, to bring about some finality to the curse and trouble which are hanging over the country at the present time.

MR. CONNOR: A coalition without consulting the Premier!

MR. HARPER: I freely say that in consulting the Premier no object could be served, because the Premier had already said that he desired it.

THE PREMIER: That is no answer.

MR. HARPER: I am quite prepared to say it was with the consent of those—

THE PREMIER: You did not get it in this case.

MR. HARPER: It comes with very bad grace from the hon. member to make these statements; it comes with very bad grace from the man who is responsible for Mr. Piesse not forming a Ministry, because he (the Premier) was the man who intrigued against Mr. Piesse.

THE PREMIER: I deny that. I never did. Mr. Piesse asked me to form this Ministry, and pressed me to do it.

MR. HARPER: The hon. member has drawn that from me in attempting to place me in a false light: he has forced me to make this statement, and I know as a fact that in consequence of Mr. Morgans, the member for Coolgardie, withholding his support largely from Mr. Piesse and up to the very last moment intimating that he would not take part in the division against the late Government, and intriguing with men on this side to join him and form a Ministry, that was the cause why the member for the Williams was unable to form a Ministry; and for the Premier to rise in his place and accuse people on this (Government) side who are trying to settle the trouble in the country by coalition, of "ratting"—

THE PREMIER: You have hit it all right.

MR. HARPER: I have not "ratted."

THE PREMIER: No one ever did more so.

MR. HARPER: I have not flinched from the position which I took up.

MEMBER: Are you going to take a position in the Ministry?

MR. HARPER: That depends on those behind me. I am not going to give away my party.

MEMBER: That is the report.

MR. HARPER: You should not follow reports. My position is a plain one. I want to see the crisis settled. I am not going to take a position without terms, and those terms will be satisfactory to those with whom I have been working. Therefore I repudiate entirely the remarks

of the Premier that I intrigued with the other side to join them.

THE PREMIER: There is no doubt about it.

MR. HARPER: If the hon. member accuses me of an untruth, I cannot help it.

THE PREMIER: Oh, I will not do that.

MR. HARPER: I have no hesitation in saying that my position is a distinct one. I have everything to lose by it. I have not the slightest wish, and never had, to take office in this country. I have several times been asked, and as frequently refused; and I should distinctly refuse now, and am prepared to refuse, if any other combination can be brought about. I do not want office. Do not imagine that I do. It is nothing to me. If hon. members on this (Government) side of the House think I cannot help the position. I am quite prepared to remain as I am and as I have always been. I again say I entirely repudiate the imputation cast on me by the Premier, and I think it comes with very ill grace from the Premier to say what he did.

MR. LEAKE: I desire to offer a personal explanation as representing a party in the House. I understand—

THE SPEAKER: There is no question before the House.

MR. LEAKE: I know there is not, but I understand the late Premier—I beg pardon, the Premier—said that there were traitors and spies in the camp, and he seemed to intimate that they acted with my connivance.

THE PREMIER: I did not say so.

MR. LEAKE: If the hon. gentleman does not accuse me of anything, I am satisfied.

THE PREMIER: I do not accuse you of anything of that kind.

THE SPEAKER: If this motion be carried, the House will not meet again until Tuesday. I do not know if that will be convenient or not.

Question put, and passed without dissent.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 5:29 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 24th December, 1901.

Political Situation: New Ministry—Notices—Personal Explanations (two)—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

POLITICAL SITUATION—NEW MINISTRY.

THE SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the Colonial Secretary:—

Sir,—In compliance with Section 30, Sub-section 3, of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899, I beg to notify you that His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to make the following appointments:—

George Leake, Esq., M.L.A., to be Premier and Attorney General.

Walter Kingsmill, Esq., M.L.A., to be Minister for Railways.

Frederick Illingworth, Esq., M.L.A., to be Colonial Secretary and Treasurer.

Henry Gregory, Esq., M.L.A., to be Minister for Mines.

C. H. Rason, Esq., M.L.A., to be Minister for Public Works.

I have the honour to be, sir,
Your obedient servant,

FREDERICK ILLINGWORTH,
Colonial Secretary.

These gentlemen having accepted offices of profit, their seats now become vacant. Before I can issue writs for filling the vacancies, it is necessary their seats shall be declared vacant by the Legislative Assembly.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (East Fremantle): I beg leave to move, without notice, that the seats of the members for West Perth (Hon. G. Leake), Pilbarra (Hon. W. Kingsmill), Cue (Hon. F. Illingworth), Menzies (Hon. H. Gregory), and Guildford (Hon. C. H. Rason) be declared vacant.

MR. F. WALLACE (Mt. Magnet): I second the motion.

Question put and passed.

NOTICES.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: I move that the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday, the 14th of January.

MR. W. J. GEORGE (Murray): I want to give notice of a question.